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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 MCE-00 NEAE-00 OMB-01
TRSE-00 /061 W
----------062176 281246Z /17
O R 281154Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6091
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 2041

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: MASS, MARR, IN, PK, US
SUBJECT: INDIAN AIRCRAFT PURCHASES

REF: A) NEW DELHI 3051 (B) NEW DELHI A-36

1. STARTING FROM THE PREMISE THAT INDIAN GOVERNMENT SEEMS INCREASINGLY SERIOUS IN EFFORTS TO MAKE A LARGE PURCHASE OF DEEP PENETRATION STRIKE AIRCRAFT (DPSA) THIS MESSAGE SUGGESTS THAT WE NEED (A) WASHINGTON'S APPRAISAL OF THE PRESENT LINEUP OF STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL AIR POWER BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN, AND ALSO THE EFFECT ON THAT LINEUP OF A NEW INDIAN PURCHASE OF JAGUARS, AND (B) CONSIDERATION OF ACTIONS WE SHOULD TAKE IN THE LIGHT OF THAT APPRAISAL.

2. NEW DELHI'S REFTEL AND REFAIR AS WELL AS OTHER REPORTS AND INDIAN PRESS STORIES SHOW THAT GOI IS SERIOUSLY PRESSING ASSERTIONS THAT PAKISTAN'S PRESENT COMBAT AIR POWER IS A SUBSTANTIAL, EXISTING THREAT THAT NEEDS TO BE COUNTERED BY PURCHASE OF JAGUARS OR COMPARABLE DPSA. IN ORDER TO CLARIFY OUR OWN THINKING ON THE MATTER, I SUGGEST THAT BOTH EMBASSY DELHI AND EMBASSY ISLAMABAD NEED AN APPRAISAL FROM WASHINGTON THAT WOULD GUIDE US IN DETERMINING HOW MUCH
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OF THE INDIAN CASE WE CAN ACCEPT AND HOW MUCH WE WILL HAVE DIFFERENCES WITH.

3. I SUGGEST THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES CONCERNED SHOULD BE ASKED TO TELL US HOW USG VIEWS PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAK AND INDIAN COMBAT AIR CAPABILITIES, AS WELL AS EFFECT ON THAT RELATIONSHIP OF A SUBSTANTIAL INDIAN

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PURCHASE. APPRAISAL SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON AIR CAPABILITIES,
INCLUDING DEPLOYABILITY AND THE AIR DEFENSE EVIRONMENT.
IT WOULD BE MOST USEFUL IF STUDY ADDRESSES COMPARABILITY
OF MIRAGE V AND JAGUAR; WHETHER JAGUAR CAPABILITIES
REPRESENT NEW LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION IN SUBCONTINENTAL
WEAPONRY; AND MORE GENERAL QUESTION OF THE PRESENT AIR
POWER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

4. WITHOUT WISHING TO PREJUDGE SUCH A STUDY, IF IT SHOULD
CONCLUDE THAT THE ADDITION OF JAGUARS TO THE IAF WOULD
CREATE OR ADD TO SUBSTANTIAL DISPARITY, WE NEED TO THINK
WHAT WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT.

5. I SUSPECT IT WOULD NOT BE USEFUL TO TRY TO DISSUADE
THE INDIANS FROM THE PURCHASE. AMB GOHEEN AND DEPT. WILL,
HOWEVER, WANT TO CONSIDER, IN LIGHT OF OTHER IMPORTANT
BILATERAL CONCERNS WITH INDIA, HOW USG SHOULD HANDLE WHAT
PROMISES TO BE A SHARP DISAGREEMENT WITH GOI IN A MATTER
AFFECTING THE REGION AS A WHILE AS WELL AS USG BILATERAL
REALTIONS WITH PAKISTAN. WE NEED TO CONSIDER HOW WE
POSITION OURSELVES TO DEAL WITH A LONG-RANGE PROBLEM.

6. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT SILENCE ON THE MATTER IS THE WORST
OPTION. THE GOI MAY CONCLUDE (AS THEY MAY ALREADY HAVE
CONCLUDED FROM THE ABSENCE OF DISCUSSION OF THIS TOPIC
DURING THE PRESIDENT'S JANUARY VISIT TO DELHI) THAT THE
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USG IS LARGELY INDIFFERENT. WE WILL HAVE DECREASED OUR
FLEXIBILITY OF RESPONSE BY FAILING TO PUT THE GOI ON NOTICE
THAT WE HAVE DIFFERENT VIEW FROM THEIRS, AND WE WILL BE
IN A WORSE POSITION WITH PAKISTAN IF WE HAVE TO ADMIT WE
DID NOTHING TO MAKE OUR VIEWS KNOWN TO INDIA.

7. IF THE STUDY SHOWS (AS WE THINK IT WILL) THAT A LARGE
JAGUAR PURCHASE BY INDIA WOULD BE ESCALATORY AND DESTABILIZING,
THEN WE SHOULD MAKE SURE THE INDIANS ARE AWARE--BEFORE
THEY MAKE THEIR OWN FINAL DECISIONS--OF OUR ASSESSMENT:
(A) THAT THEIR PURCHASE WILL NATURALLY COMPEL PAKISTAN
TO STEP UP ITS SEARCH FOR LARGER NUMBER OF COMPARABLE
AIRCRAFT, AND, (B) THAT SHOULD PAKISTAN TURN TO US, WE WOULD BE FORCED
--
IN LINE WITH USG ARMS TRANSFER POLICIES AND GUIDELINES AND
ASSUMING OUR HANDS ARE NOT TIED BY OTHER CONSIDERATIONS--
TO REASSESS OUR POLICY ON COMBAT AIRCRAFT SALES TO PAKISTAN.
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